

VZCZCXYZ0009  
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHIN #0588/01 1201003  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 291003Z APR 08  
FM AIT TAIPEI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 8784  
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 8208  
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 9449

UNCLAS AIT TAIPEI 000588

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EAP/TC, EAP/PA, EAP/PD - NIDA EMMONS  
DEPARTMENT PASS AIT/WASHINGTON

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [TW](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: CROSS-STRAIT RELATIONS

11. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused news coverage April 29 on the announcement of the second lineup of 18 Cabinet members; on the successful rescue of eight scuba divers; and a victim whose blood clot and subsequent coma are suspected of being caused by the contraceptive patch Evra.

12. In terms of editorials and commentaries, major newspapers continued the discussion on the implications on cross-strait relations of appointing Lai Shin-yuan, a hardliner vis-a-vis China, as the Chairperson of Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council. An editorial in the centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" questioned how Lai is going to accommodate her previous anti-China position with her new position. A column in the pro-unification "United Daily News" tried to interpret what message the appointment of Lai sends to various sides. An op-ed in the "United Daily News" warned Taiwan's President-elect Ma Ying-jeou that a wrong appointment, suggesting Lai, might consume mutual trust between Taiwan and China. A column in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" criticized Lai for not being able to represent the Green camp's position at all. End summary.

A) "Several Opinions on the Second Lineup of the New Cabinet"

The centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] editorialized (4/29):

"... After Lai Shin-yuan takes up her position [as Chairperson of Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council (MAC)], she will immediately face the resumption of dialogue between Taiwan's Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) and China's Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS) in June, and the [opening of] weekend direct charter flights in July. Will she accept them totally? She once harshly lambasted the KMT for helping farmers sell fruit to China. Facing the revised policy of Taiwan's Council of Agriculture (COA) that the COA will use public funds to subsidize eight cities and counties' fruit to sell to China, will [Lai] continue or expand the policy? What is more important, the core of [Taiwan's President-elect] Ma Ying-jeou's government to improve Taiwan's economy lies in cross-strait policy. The MAC is the key organization in charge of whether policies [toward China] can be eased, including [policies under the purview of] the Central Bank, the Ministry of Transportation and Communications, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Economic Affairs, the COA, the Financial Supervisory Commission, and even the Sports Affairs Council. If Lai has different opinions, how will Ma's government manage? If Lai does not have different opinions, how will she handle sarcasm from both ruling and opposition party legislators during testimony before the Legislative Yuan? ..."

B) "To Interpret Lai Shin-yuan"

The "Black and White" column in the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] wrote (4/29):

"... At the onset of a new situation, everyone is trying to find things out and explore, and 'releasing the wrong message' is something that everyone is most afraid of. No matter what [Taiwan's President-elect] Ma Ying-jeou's motivation is in appointing Lai [to be the Chairperson of Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council], it is up to the various sides to 'interpret' the 'message,' which is something that Ma cannot control. At the moment, not only Beijing might 'misjudge,' but also the Blue camp internally does not know how to 'interpret' [the message]. [Premier-designate] Liu Chao-shiuan, in an implicit way, only said that cross-Strait [policy] is the President's power. ..."

C) "[Taiwan's President-elect] Ma [Ying-jeou's] Having Too Much Fun Will Consume Mutual Trust between Two Sides across the Taiwan Strait"

Hsieh Ta-ning, a professor in Taiwan's National Chung Cheng University, opined in the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] (4/29):

"... The reason for the choice is apparently that Ma hopes to expand the foundation of his Mainland policy in society. What is more important is that Ma hopes [former Taiwan President] Lee Teng-hui's shadow hiding behind Lai [Shin-yuan, the Chairperson-designate of Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council] can be a safety valve when pan-Green people play with fire in the back yard while he pursues breakthroughs in cross-Strait [relations]. Of course, Ma is attempting to send out a clear message to the various sides, including China, the United States and Japan, that his cross-Strait policy will never tilt toward the other side across the Strait; he will insist on the advocacy of Taiwan-centric identity. In other words, the personnel arrangement is not for policy, rather for political concerns. [The appointment of Lai] explicitly shows Ma's hard hand in the cross-Strait issues. ..."

"But to my point of view, the issue is not on Lai, but on another face [Lee] that will definitely show on Lai's face. Everyone can try to remember; didn't the crisis across the Strait reach its boiling point because of the state-to-state relations [that Lee came up with], and both sides across the Strait therefore lost all foundation of mutual trust since then? At the moment when both sides across the Strait seek to break the ice, what does it mean to let Lee's face emerge again in such a clear way? Is it possible that Ma attempts to implement a Lee roadmap without Lee? I believe that this is a big question mark in everyone's mind."

"If that is the case, isn't Ma playing a joke on everyone? We all know that there is a two-hand strategy when it comes to cross-Strait policy. So it is understandable that Ma plays a hard hand. But isn't it a bit too much to play [strategy] in such a way as to consume hard-won mutual trust which has just begun to recover? ..."

D) "Eating Watermelon in the Middle of the Night" [meaning someone exhibiting abnormal behavior]

The "Free Talks" column in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 720,000] (4/29):

"... [Taiwan's President-elect] Ma Ying-jeou claims that a consensus in the society can be forged by appointing Lai [Shin-yuan as Chairperson of Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council]. [Ma] means that the move is to cozy up to the 5.44 million voters who did not vote for him and bring harmony to the society. However, the influence of the Taiwan Solidarity Union is diminishing. Lai is also someone who has an individual style, does not follow trends and has no symbolic meaning in the Green camp. Whether Ma appointing this person is able to heal the Green camp supporters' wounds is questionable ..."

YOUNG